

Blogging

A White Paper



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Introduction:

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What is a Blog?

The word blog, when used as a noun, is a contraction of the words “web and log”, which is an online log of you thoughts and ideas. A blog is most often maintained by an individual on a web 2.0 website that supports blogging. Blogs are organized in reverse chronological order, allowing the most recent blog entry to be displayed first and the previous entries follow according to posting date. Blogs have a heading, time and date stamp and give viewers the opportunity to respond to the blog by commenting on the blog, which is called a post. When the word blog is used as a verb it means to maintain or contribute content to a blog. When someone blogs they add entries to their own blog or respond to the blogs of others. Blog site owners most often contribute to their blog on a frequent basis.

Characteristics of a Blog

A blog can be described as an online journal with one or many contributors. Blogs can incorporate text, hyperlinks, and other forms of media such as images and video. A blog is usually made up of the following components:

1. Post Date- dates and time the post was published;
2. Category- category the post is labeled with;
3. Title – Main title of the post;
4. Body-main content of the post;
5. Trackback-links back from other sites;
6. Comments- comments added by readers.

Blogs are different from traditional websites and have advantages over more traditional sites such as:

- 1 .It is easy to create new pages, updating a blog requires no technical or webpage design background;
2. Ability to filter content by date, category, author, etc.;
3. Blog administrators can invite and add other authors to contribute to the blog and their access is easily manageable;
4. Ability to form learning communities;
5. Opportunity to serve as a digital portfolio.

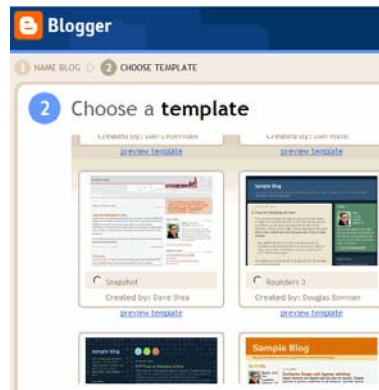
The Blogging Process

To create your own blog you first need to set up an account at a web 2.0 site that supports blogging. One site that can be used is www.blogger.com. Below are the steps to create a blog on with blogger.

Step 1: Sign up for an account by filling out your personal information, creating a username and password.



Step 2: Once you have a blogging account you can design it to fit your needs.



Step 3: You can create your own blogs on blogger. Once you have created blogs they will appear in the format below.



Step 5: You can decide if you would like for everyone to view your blog or if you would like to select specific people to view your blog. People may respond to your blog and you may also look up blogs that interest you and respond to them as well.



Required Tools and Equipment

Blogging does not require you to have any tools other than a computer that is connected to the internet. There are many free blogging websites and maintaining your blog does not require any specific equipment that is not found on a computer. Free blogging websites include: www.thoughts.com, www.blogger.com, www.wordpress.com, www.livejournal.com.

All four websites allow the user to create ones own profile, personalize their blogging space while providing multiple level of privacy setting for the user to choose from.

www.thoughts.com

I use this website with my 8th grade students because it is the only blogging website that is not currently blocked by Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). My students and I both enjoy using this site. My students and I post blogs and comments to each other's blogs as part of literature discussions with our in class novel assignments and poetry unit. I find the website very easy to use and it is convenient that my students and I can set privacy settings that prevent anyone that is not in our class from reading or posting comments to our blog.

The main drawbacks of this site is it has a lot of advertisements throughout the site that are often distracting when creating or reading blogs and it is difficult to upload pictures onto your blog.

www.blogger.com

I use this website for my personal blog. When someone goes to this site to first create their own blog the website provides user friendly instructions and if you already have a Google account you can use it as your blogging account as well. I enjoy that it is easy to use and virtually free of advertisements. It is easy to upload pictures to your own blog or add pictures as comments to other blogs. When viewing my blog or the blogs of others I can read them easily without being distracted by advertisements surrounding the blog or

popping up while I am reading the blog. The website is very easy to use and has a large network of users.

The only drawback for this blogging website is that its popularity has created attention and caused it to be blocked by CMS schools so I am not able to use it in my own classroom.

www.wordpress.com

This website has many beneficial features. It has a statistics system that allows you to view how many people are viewing your blog and which of your post are the most popular with readers. It has features that allow you to easily upload pictures and embed videos from YouTube or Google. This website also allows you to create webpages attached to your blog such as an “about me” page that could be added as a link on your blog.

A drawback of this website is some features that are standard on other blogging websites are considered premium services that you can only receive for a fee. The user is also limited to 35 users per private blog, but for \$30 a year you can upgrade to have unlimited users. It also offers other premium services for a fee. For \$15.00 a year you can secure your own domain name and you can add extra storage to your account for \$20-\$90 a year. This website does feature Google advertisements on your blog page, but for \$30 a year your blog can be free of advertisements.

www.livejournal.com

A benefit of livejournal is that it can be used as a blog, private journal, a discussion forum or social network. It also allows you to easily upload photos. Once you create your account you can use all of these features or only one, depending on your needs. You can also search other member’s journals by category or read various post that all relate to a particular interest.

One drawback of this website it is not user friendly. The multiple options may make it difficult for someone with little blogging experience to figure out if they are creating a blog, journal or discussion forum. If someone is only looking for a blogging website I would not suggest this website due to the confusing nature of the multiple options and the lack of features specifically for blogging.

Blogging related to the NETS standards

Blogging can be used to fulfill the following National Educational Technology Standards and Performance Indicators for Teachers (NETS T).

1. Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity- Blogging accomplishes this goal by encouraging students to write their own thoughts and respond to the thoughts of others. Students are able to discover creative ways to display their

- thoughts on a blog and have more time to analyze a topic and create their response than they would in an in-class discussion.
2. Design and Develop Digital-Age Learning Experiences and Assessments – Blogging accomplishes this goal by allowing students to use technology to participate in online discussions and share their work by using online portfolios. Teachers can read their students' blogs and respond to other students' blogs as a way to assess the students' understanding of a particular topic.
 3. Model Digital-Age Work and Learning- Blogging allows teachers to model to their students how technology can be used in work and learning. Blogging as part of a class assignment helps students to make the connection between using technology and learning. This can inspire students and teachers to seek other ways in which technology can be used to enhance their learning.
 4. Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility- Blogging accomplishes this goal because students must be taught to be good citizens as part of the blogging process. Students would have to be responsible enough to post appropriate comments and blogs to their site and to respond appropriately to their classmates.

Environmental Factors to Consider

There are environmental factors to consider when creating blogs, reading blogs or commenting on the blogs of others. It is important to understand that when you create a blog it is not a private journal, but instead a way to express your opinions to the public. Some blogging websites allow you to restrict who views your blog, but when writing anything online it is important not to put up information that you would not wish to share. When reading blogs of others you must remember that blogs are opinions and should not be read as if they are facts or scholarly sources. When you comment on the blogs of others keep in mind that your comments are also visible for all and that is important to be respectful. Often it is easier to express strong opinions online, but practicing digital citizenship is also important.

There are some environmental factors specific to using blogs within the classroom. There may be an issue of access, where students do not have access to computers at home. Teachers would need to provide time for students to access their blogs at school if they wanted to incorporate them into lessons. Some school systems may also block blogging websites or limit access to them in the school setting. Teachers will have to search and find blogging websites that are available for use at their school. Teachers will also have to closely monitor the blogs and comments of their students to make sure that no inappropriate blogs are being posted.

Blogging in the Classroom

Blogs can be incorporated into the classroom in a way that benefits all learners. Using blogs inspires the creation of a classroom community that allows students to form relationships and allows for a place to post assignments and news. Blogs provide a space where students collaborate and can work to further develop writing with the advantage of

an instant audience. Blogs are a great place for online mentoring. For example, a class of older students can help a class of younger students develop more confidence in their writing skills. Students can also participate in cooperative learning activities that require them to post information they have gathered or their opinions to the blog. A class blog allows the opportunity for students to discuss topics outside of the classroom. With a blog, every person has an equal opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions and students who are too shy to speak out in the classroom may be more likely to contribute their ideas. Students have time to react to ideas and reflect on learning, which would inspire higher level thinking than in-class discussions. Blogs are also a great place for students to create digital portfolios.

Educational Uses of Blogs

1. Common online forum for unit-related information such as calendars, events, assignments and resources
2. Place for students to post questions related to an assignment
3. Comments based on literature readings and student responses
4. A collaborative space for students to review course materials
5. Online gallery space for review of writings, etc.
6. Peer collaboration with commenting feature
7. Encouraging reflection by teachers commenting on students entries
8. Development of a online portfolio

Benefits of Blogging in the Classroom	Drawbacks of Blogging in the Classroom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivational for students because it allows them to read, write and discuss using technology. 2. Provides opportunity for students to read and write that is different from the way they traditionally read and write in school. 3. Online forums for discussion and collaboration between students and teachers 4. Creates an environment that easily allows for scaffolding and mentoring 5. Can be accessed from home if students have home internet access 6. Promotes critical and analytical thinking skills for students 7. Students have a potential for increased access to exposure to quality information 8. Students receive a combination of solitary and social interaction 9. Allows for individual expression of thought 10. Allows for shy students to safely participate in a discussion 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Online access at school and at home may be limited 2. Some blogs may be viewed publicly, which may create a security risk and make some parents, teachers and students uncomfortable 3. Blogs are often opinions and should not be considered factual and some students may read blogs without considering this fact. 4. Student may make inappropriate postings

Conclusion

Blogging is an inexpensive and practical technology application that can be used both inside and outside the classroom. The only technology needed to blog is a computer and the internet. This accessibility allows for many people to become bloggers and explore the blogs of others without purchasing any software. This will increase communication among people and break barriers of location and time. The use of blogging as part of classroom instruction will also become increasingly popular as more teachers become knowledgeable about the concept and see the possible benefits connected to blogging.